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in chs. 21-23 of Exodus. The terse, laconic form in which they appear is entirely in harmony with this supposition; and there is documentary confirmation of it. Before the giving of the law on Sinai Moses is represented as saying to Jethro, his father-in-law: 'The people come unto me to inquire of God . . . and judge between a man and his neighbor, and I make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.'

"Apart from the Book of the Covenant there is the legislation respecting the tabernacle and its worship contained in Exodus—Numbers and the code of Deuteronomy. A remarkable misapprehension seems to exist as to the amount of matter contained in these codes. Possibly the mistake arose from a sense of their unexampled influence upon the institutions of the civilized world. In this respect the Decalogue, which might be written on a five-cent piece, is a tremendous code. But, deep and wide as has been their effect, the actual words of the Pentateuch laws are comparatively few. The first code covers about five pages, or a space of twenty by seven inches, in the Hebrew Bible. The laws of Deuteronomy, we are told, were inscribed on plastered stones after reaching Canaan. Had the character in which they were written been enlarged to five times their size as they now appear in the Hebrew, they could all have been written on a space eight feet by three and would then have required less room by one-half than was allotted to the famous Behistun inscription of the Persian Darius. Compare the amount of new or revised legislation called for in one of the United States in a single year with that of the whole Israelitish nation in a peculiar period of its history and during the space of forty years. Compare further with the same the changes that are often thought necessary in laws, made one year, by a legislature meeting the next or the second year after, under circumstances, to all appearance, quite similar, and one will be surprised not only at the condensed form but the wonderful unity and consistency of the laws of the Pentateuch."

A BIBLICAL CHECK TO BIBLE CHRONOLOGY.

BY PROFESSOR CHARLES RUFUS BROWN, PH. D.,

Newton Centre, Mass.

Strictly speaking, there is no biblical chronology; for the biblical writers do not give us a *system* of chronology, but merely detached chronological statements. For convenience, the inferences from what they say, made by different writers and combined in systems of their own, may be called biblical, inasmuch as they purport to be based on biblical passages. It must be remembered, however, that these inferences have no absolute authority for us, and it is an open secret that no scheme has yet been devised which has not contradicted some statements made by the Bible. If learned men have failed to discover a system reconcilable with the Bible and have differed in the inferences they have drawn from it, it becomes a very grave question in our own interpretations of the Bible what to do with a statement involving chronology. One canon is certainly sound. If by an inference from some biblical passage we reach a conclusion which seems on other accounts improbable, positive evidence in the Bible itself against this conclusion will justify us in saying that the inference was wrong. Take a case in point—the

familiar statement in 2 Kings 18:13. It would seem from 18:1,10, if we suppose the fall of Samaria occurred in B. C. 722, as if Hezekiah came to the throne in or about the year 727. In that case (according to 18:13) the invasion of Sennacherib would fall in or about the year 714 B. C. It appears, however, from the external history of the time that this last event occurred considerably later than this.* Is there any biblical evidence that Hezekiah's reign did not begin in 727, as supposed? There is. Let the reader examine for himself 2 Chron. chs. 29-31, without chronological presupposition and without the aid of commentaries, and say whether all the events there narrated did not occur in the first year of Hezekiah's reign and *after the captivity of the ten tribes*.† If so, the first year of Hezekiah must have been later than 722, and may have been 714, as seems to be demanded by the Assyrian records. The writer has spoken of this, to show once again how, by a careful examination of the Bible, supposed contradictions with settled facts may be eliminated.

* See the careful and convincing argument of Schrader, in *Die Keilinschriften u. d. Alte Test.* pp. 313-317, who places it in 701 B. C.

† After preparing the above, the present writer noticed with pleasure the recognition of these facts by J. Schwartz, in the *Bib. Sac.* for Jan., 1888, p. 69, whose article is referred to and perhaps too summarily condemned in the March *STUDENT*.